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ABSTRACT

This document presents information on the Blue Springs School District's Student Assistance Program (SAP) designed to address the social and family issues that affect students' academic performance. The Blue Springs SAP began in fall 1986, evolved rapidly, and in 1992 was in 18 building sites. In 1994 the program developed links with the Blue Springs Police Department and the district's Student Assistance Program. In 1993-94 the program processed over 700 referrals on students. The Blue Springs program received the National Organization of Student Assistance Program and Partners State award in 1994 and was nominated for national recognition. Lists and charts, which comprise more than half the paper, provide information on: characteristics associated with students at-risk for dropping out; program components; the School District's Student Assistance Program model (CHOICES); behavioral referral process flow chart; team member positions in buildings; and responsibilities of central office administration, building level administration, and classroom teachers. (JB)

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STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS: THE EMERGING ROLE OF SCHOOLS

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Student Assistance Programs - The Emerging Role of Schools

School-based programs that deal with the social and family issues of youth experienced rapid growth in the last decade. Educators have realized that student learning is greatly affected by many outside influences. Research indicates an increase in the percentage of students who enter school at poverty level or from non-traditional settings. Hodgkinson (1985) interprets consensus data and concludes that 59 percent of all children born in 1983 will live with only one parent before reaching age 18. Hodgkinson (1991) further reports that the feminization of poverty is also a contributing factor to the change in the family structure. Twenty-three percent of America's smallest children (birth to Age 5) live in poverty, the highest rate of any industrialized nation.

Concomitantly with the change in family structure has been an increase in violence portrayed in the media and entering the schools. A recent study by Asmussen (1992) revealed that no community is immune to violence. It was further inferred that any type of disturbance should be an opportunity for creating a more positive school climate. However, in a study by Boothe (1993) responses from 1,216 school administrators revealed that although they acknowledged increasing violence in schools, most executive feel that the violence is happening in someone else's backyard.

Data on increasing poverty, diversity, and violence in the schools is reason enough to develop school-based programs to assist youth. But these are not the only problems youth face in today's society. Tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs are influences that have been with youth for many years. They are still of prime concern to society. The last twenty years have seen increases in non-traditional families with in turn raises concerns about childcare in general. In summary, the youth of today face unique issues in their development.

Student assistance programs (SAP) have emerged in many schools as a system to address the aforementioned problems. The Blue Springs R-IV School District implemented a student assistance program in the fall of 1986. The program evolved rapidly as the response was overwhelming. By 1992, all eighteen building sites had an operational SAP. In 1994, the system evolved further as a formal system linking the Blue Springs Police Department and the School District's Student Assistance Program (CHOICES). In a suburban district of 12,000 students, the 1993-94 school year resulted in processing over 700 referrals on students. Of these 700, 64 were networked to professional mental health agencies.

The purpose of this presentation is to provide educators with the rationale for and a model of a working student assistance program. The Blue Springs model received the National Organization of Student

Assistance Program and Partners State award in 1994 and was nominated for national recognition. The model provides a referral/intervention process and guidelines for creating site-based teams.

At the conclusion of the presentation participants will: 1) have a clear understanding of the need for student assistance programs, 2) be able to describe the six components of a comprehensive SAP and, 3) understand the role of a SAP in enhancing the school environment.

References

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Characteristics Associated with Student At-Risk for Dropping Out of School

Characteristics **Classification Categories**

EDUCATION-RELATED

Age - 2 years or older than classmates
Grade Retention - 1 or more years behind classmates
Grade Point Average - record of poor or falling grades
Poor Reading and/or Math Ability
Poor School Attendance
Low Involvement in School's Extracurricular Activities
Low Interest in School
Discipline Problems - referrals, suspensions, expulsions

FAMILY-RELATED

Low Education Attainment Level of Mother and/or Father
Father Not Present in the Home
Family Size - 3 or more siblings living at home
Low-Skilled Occupations of Mother and/or Father
Home Environment - living in an abusive home

SOCIOECONOMIC-RELATED

Low Income Household - qualify for free/reduced lunch program
Student Employment - over 15 hours per week
High Mobility - frequent changes in residence and in school attended

SOCIAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL-RELATED

Lower Intelligence - I.Q. score below 90
Minority Ethnic Group - Black, Hispanic, American Indian
Home Environment - living in an abusive home
Poor Self-Image
Hostile Toward or Not Accepting Authority
Learning Disability
Limited English Language Proficiency

Source: Research results summarized by Belcher and Hatley (1993) from literature reviewed for 1965-1992.

COMPONENTS OF THE STUDENT PROGRAM

1. **PREVENTION** - services, education, and activities which promote, support, and reinforce healthy lifestyles among students.

2. **IDENTIFICATION** of students whose problems are disruptive or inhibiting their educational process and performance and that of others.

3. **INTERVENTION** which will include requested action where warranted to motivate the referred student and family to seek help when needed.

4. **ASSESSMENT** of the nature and severity of the problem. (The Professional/Clinical assessment takes place off of school grounds at the agency of choice determined by the family and is free of service.)

5. **REFERRALS** through appropriate systems and resource agencies.

6. **SUPPORT** to encourage and devise methods that reduce destructive behaviors and encourage healthy lifestyle choices. (This icludes support groups, buddy systems, curriculum adjustments in scheduling, needs determined by the Care Teams within the schools and with the School Coordinators and Administrators, etc.)

7. **FOLLOW THROUGH** is crucial even if a student is under professional care, due to exhibited observable behavior data within the school environment which establishes a current need. If already in outside agency care - a team approach will ensue.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM MODEL

CHOICES

The CHOICES program is a comprehensive student assistance program which:

1. Functions Kindergarten through 12th Grade

2. Initiates and maintains an effective partnership of the school, the community, the family and the student working together for the benefit and education of all.

3. Provides a forum for the discussion and potential resolution of issues recognized by the National Association of School Principals some of which are:

   Substance/Chemical Abuse
   Teen Pregancy
   Suicide
   Dropout/Truancy Rates
   Vandalism
   Grief Recovery
   Violence and Gangs

4. Provides services and support to young people who exhibit a wide range of problematic issues through policy-based programs of prevention, education, referral, support, intervention, and resource systems.

5. Promotes healthy lifestyle choices by addressing critical issues in a proactive way.

6. Provides pervasive caring through intentional assistance in response to observable data to which today's children exhibit in their school environment.

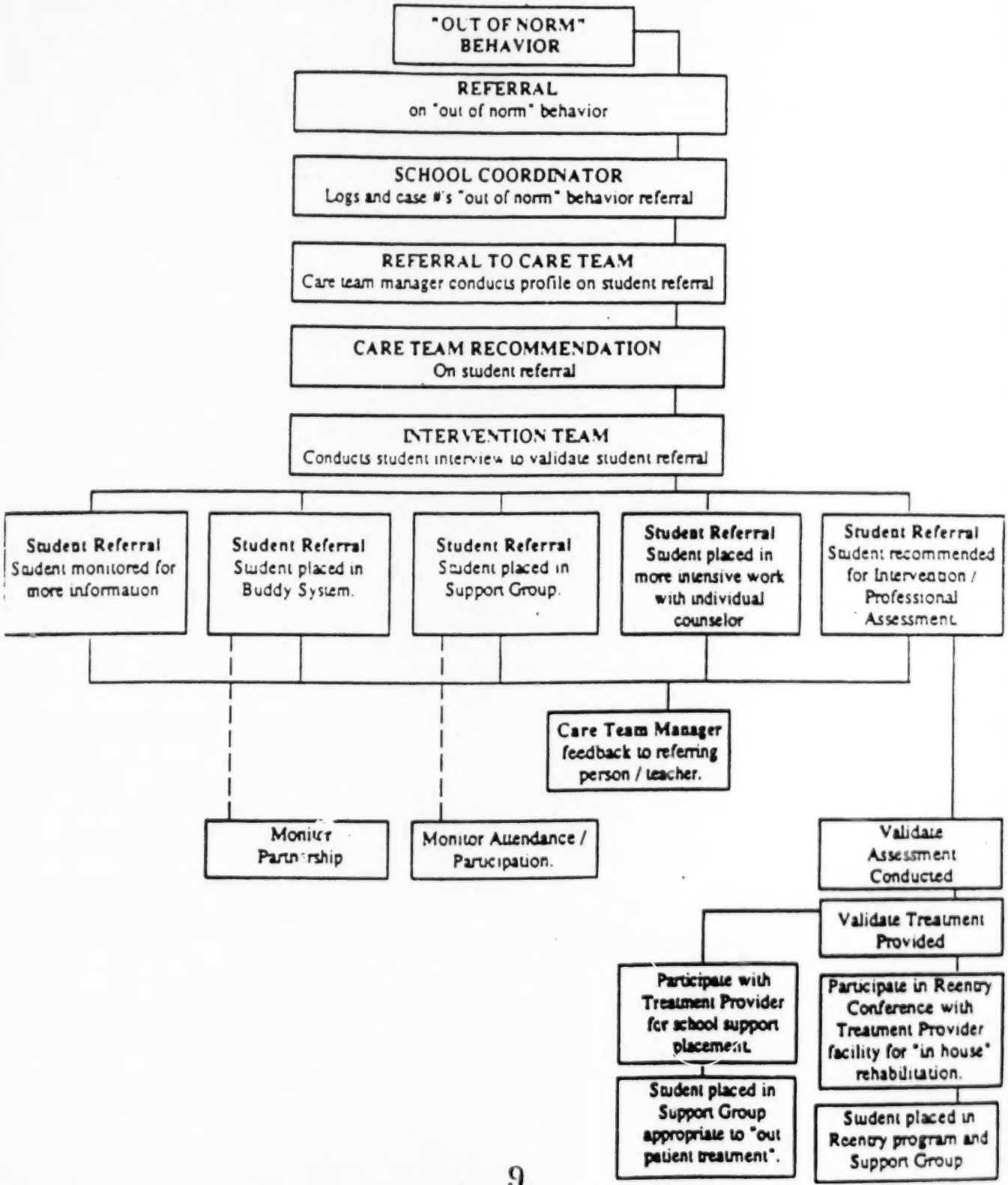
7. Provides an atmosphere of acceptance for students and staff to work through processing issues of personal struggle or pain towards resolution.

8. Empowers people to take charge of their lives, to develop pro-social skills that allow them to participate, to prioritize, to negotiate, to set realistic goals, to withdraw with dignity, to seek advice when needed, and to recognize limits.

9. Is plan oriented with options discussed and a team approach used toward resolution.

CHOICES STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Behavioral Referral Process Flow Chart


"OUT OF NORM" BEHAVIOR
REFERRAL
on "out of norm" behavior
SCHOOL COORDINATOR
Logs and case #'s "out of norm" behavior referral
REFERRAL TO CARE TEAM
Care team manager conducts profile on student referral
CARE TEAM RECOMMENDATION
On student referral
INTERVENTION TEAM
Conducts student interview to validate student referral
Student Referral
Student monitored for more information
Student Referral
Student placed in Buddy System.
Student Referral
Student placed in Support Group.
Student Referral
Student placed in more intensive work with individual counselor
Student Referral
Student recommended for Intervention / Professional Assessment
Care Team Manager feedback to referring person / teacher.
Monitor Partnership
Monitor Attendance / Participation.
Validate Assessment Conducted
Validate Treatment Provided
Participate with Treatment Provider for school support placement
Participate in Reentry Conference with Treatment Provider facility for "in house" rehabilitation.
Student placed in Support Group appropriate to "out patient treatment".
Student placed in Reentry program and Support Group

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TEAM MEMBER POSITIONS WITHIN BUILDINGS

School Coordinator (1)
Coordinates all building processes, holds ultimate responsibility

Care Team Chairman (1)
Coordinates Care Team and Follow Up Placement

Care Team Members (9)
Becomes the case manager for Referrals
(1) 1 year term
(1) 1 year term
(1) 1 year term
(1) 2 year term
(1) 2 year term
(1) 2 year term
(1) 3 year term
(1) 3 year term
(1) 3 year term
Elementary teams have 2 - 1 year terms, 2 - 2 year terms, and 2 - 3 year terms.

Intervention Teams (3 or 4)
Conduct students interviews and meet with families in Intervention Process
(1) Automatic is School Coordinator
(1) Automatic is Care Team Chairman
(1) Intervention Team Member
(1) Intervention Team Member

Support Group Leaders Chairman (1)
(should be a support group leader)
Coordinates needs of Support Group Leaders through the Care Team Chairman and the School Coordinator. Helps other support group leaders develop ideas, secure attendance, etc.

Support Group Leaders (# as needed)
Conducts support group

Buddy System Chairman (1)
Coordinates needs of Buddy Teachers through the Care Team Chairmen and the School Coordinator. Helps other Buddy Teachers develop ideas for working with kids.

Buddy Teachers (# as needed)
Becomes "significant other" in a child's life and is a partner with them.

Principals and counselors are ex officio members of all teams and may indicate where and how they would like to participate.

Central Office Administration

* Portrays schools as a caring place for all children
* Prevents negative reactions to crisis situations.
* Increases average daily attendance.
* Form healthy partnerships with mental health providers and churches.
* A decrease of discipline appeals to central office.
* Most student assistance programs can be supported by grants and community partnerships.
* Avenue to direct parents who are concerned about drug use in the schools.
* SAPs are avenues to infuse curricula with prevention and healthy lifestyles information.

Building Level Administration

* Provides alternative remedy to discipline problems.
* Discipline no longer viewed as a punitive action.
* Addresses many behavioral problems in respects to instuction and learning.
* Allows school to work with parents not against.
* A preventive program for classroom discipline.
* Increases teacher's awareness of student at-risk issues.
* Allows student's to view the school as a friendly place.

Classroom Teacher

* Provides for a Generalist focus
* Creates a more client - centered focus
* Promotes the professional role of a teacher
* Creates a more global understanding of youth
* Provides a system for dealing atypical behaviors